



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

English Language and Literature B ELLB4
(Specification 2725)

Unit 4: Text Transformation

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the schools/colleges.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

While this unit continues to engender excellent work from many students, many moderators commented this year on the fact that some centres are less secure about exactly what ELLB4 should be eliciting from students. This may be connected to the fact that there is now much less opportunity for direct contact between senior moderators and centres in the form of face to face meetings. Consequently, this report focuses on important areas that some centres need to address to ensure the continued success of their students.

Joint transformations

A significant number of students produced very unbalanced work. While there does not need to be an exact parity in terms of engagement with the texts in a joint transformation, the interplay with both texts must be significant, otherwise it is virtually impossible for students to move beyond a band 3 mark. The comparative brevity of one of the source texts does not justify a cursory treatment within such a transformation. Inevitably, there was also a commensurate lack of analysis of the texts that had been relegated to a minor part within the accompanying commentaries. Problems of a lack of interplay partially arose from students basing their work on areas where the two texts contained similar elements. However, whilst such an approach can be fecund it does not always offer students the opportunity to develop the interplay between texts, as the lack of differentiation can result in one of the texts dominating.

Springboarding

This is the term used by moderators to denote work that merely takes ideas or themes from a source text and used these ideas in a new piece of the student's own. Students might, for example, write a teenage love story and claim that it is a transformation of *Romeo and Juliet*, or a detective story because there is a detective in *An Inspector Calls* (this latter, of course would also be unacceptable as Priestley is not one of the specified authors). As the much repeated mantra has it, there must be significant interplay between the source text and the transformation, which must throw considerable illumination on the source. Moderators this year noticed that *Goblin Market* by Christina Rossetti, which continues to increase in popularity as a mainline source text, suffered markedly from the springboard disease. Tales of drug-raddled young women abounded. Students appear to believe that as this text is fantastical, transformations are open to the addition of even more incredible elements. *The Handmaid's Tale* is another such text, ever popular with students. However, these are exactly the kind of texts that are provided with the greatest insight through having a little more subtlety imposed upon them.

Intrusive style models

Students who write in a very specific prose style, closely based on that of a favourite author, can cause considerable difficulties for themselves as all their effort seems to be directed at a convincing stylistic imitation rather than ensuring a creative interplay with and insight into their chosen source text which can be significantly neglected if the candidate chooses to go down style model road. Commentaries on this route often fall into potholes as there is insufficient concentration on the links between it and the transformation. A related problem concerns writing that is either straight transposition of the narrative into another genre or vehicles to provide minor characters with a voice that merely retells the narrative from a slightly different angle to provide sophisticated interplay. Such transformations generally lack the distance from the original that provides perceptive insight into the source. Such work, even if well handled, tends not to move beyond the 'thorough understanding' typical of band 5 work. Similarly, those students who follow a dramatic style model (often Alan Bennett in his

Talking Heads mode) need to think carefully about how stage directions would be interpreted by actors. A lack of attention to such detail can easily make the control of genre insecure. Some submissions displayed far too much focus on not always relevant stage directions. Unfortunately, these students' commentaries were also too focused on the stage directions. The presence of Poe on the ELLB2 syllabus and vampires within teen culture has led to a growing popularity in Gothic Transformations. However the addition of a few ravens, some brooding clouds and a hanged cat to an Alan Bennett monologue do not a new sub-genre make.

ELLB 2-style commentaries

Students need to be fully aware of the differences in form between ELLB4 commentaries and the section A analyses of ELLB2. Whilst they obviously share some common ground e.g. analysis of language features and focus upon the discourses of the texts, there are significant areas of divergence. The students from some centres produced commentaries that resembled ELLB2 analysis in their discussion of such things as authors' backgrounds and contexts of production. Such a focus in ELLB4 is irrelevant.

A further weakness of many commentaries is to rely on the feature-spotting approach, which never gains high marks. The best commentaries always show an awareness of, as the Expanded Assessment Criteria make clear, the larger discourse issues; centres should ensure that students do try to cover these. It is best in assessing students' work (both the transformations and the commentaries) that centres use both the AOs and the expanded mark scheme as the basis for their grading of students as the latter is far more detailed and, even more pertinently, is what the moderators base their marks upon. For example, the issue of interplay is treated more fully in the Expanded Marking Criteria and a number of students were over-rewarded for work that, whilst displaying 'sensitive control and manipulation of language' did not offer the insightful interplay that is characteristic of top band work.

Rubric infringements

Four are worth noting as there were more instances of these than heretofore:

- there is no need for a pre-commentary
- the word count must be adhered to for both the transformations and the commentaries – 2800+ for a commentary (as was the case with some students) is unacceptable
- folders must contain transformations of two source texts
- drafts are not required.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion